WILD WEATHER MADE HEADLINES IN '08, PG 3

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estimated
LOTTO 649

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TORONTO • WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2008 metronews.ca

Celebrity pg 12

Private nuptials perfect for ScarJo

Hundreds pay tribute to soldiers

RETURN At the end of a year that saw one of the heaviest death tolls of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, hundreds of people stood in the cold yesterday, silently waving flags, clutching yellow roses and some with tears slipping down their cheeks as the remains of three more soldiers killed in two separate attacks arrived back home.

Pte. Michael Freeman, 28, of Peterborough, died Friday. Sgt. Gregory Kruse, 40, and Warrant Officer Gaetan Roberge, 45, were killed mere hours before Freeman's flag-covered casket was loaded onto a military aircraft during a ramp ceremony in Kandahar.

Thirty-two soldiers have been killed in action this year, two more than in 2007. Canada suffered its heaviest losses in 2006 when 36 soldiers died.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL **Crease crash**

RENE JOHNSTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toronto's Ian White crashes into Atlanta goalie Johan Hedberg in front of Thrashers defenceman Jim Slater last night at the Air Canada Centre. The Leafs trailed 2-0 in the first period but went on to win 4-3 in overtime. Pavel Kubina scored the winning goal.

Crown appeals Creba acquittals

The Crown is appealing a young man's acquittals on charges relating to the wounding of six people during the Boxing Day 2005 gunfight that killed Jane Creba.

In its notice of appeal, filed with the Ontario Court of Appeal last week, the attorney general is asking that the appeal be allowed, the acquittals set aside, and a new trial ordered for a 20-year-old man who can only be identified as J.S.R.

Jane Creba

Earlier this month, a Superior Court jury convicted J.S.R. of second-degree murder, five weapons charges and two counts of aggravated assault for the wounding of two of six people injured during the shootout on Yonge Street.

During the trial, after the Crown had closed its case, Justice Ian Nordheimer told jurors he was withdrawing six attempted-murder charges and asking them to instead "consider six counts of aggravated assault." He gave no reasons. A conviction for attempted murder requires proof of the specific intent to kill.

The notice of appeal, dated Dec. 22, says the Crown is appealing "on grounds of law alone." It states the trial judge erred in law:

- In forcing the Crown to accept a particular theory of the case as an admission.
- In excluding relevant evidence of the accused's and his group's prior conduct immediately before the shooting.
- In directing verdicts of acquittal on the charges of attempted murder.
- In his instructions to the jury on the requisite elements of aggravated assault.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Canada pg 4

O'Ree scores Order of Canada

Travel pg 10

Places to visit in 2009

Next Metro

Metro will not be publishing Jan. 1. The next edition will appear Jan. 2.

ShareYourViews
torontoletters@metronews.ca

Israel considers Gaza truce offer

Israel, under international pressure, is considering a 48-hour halt to its punishing four-day air campaign on Hamas targets in Gaza to see if Palestinian militants will stop their rocket attacks on southern Israel, Israeli officials said yesterday.

Any offer would be coupled with a threat to send in ground troops if the rocket fire continues.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert discussed the proposal — floated by France's foreign minister — and other possible next steps with his foreign and defence ministers, Israeli officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not supposed to make the information public.

U.S. President George W. Bush and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called leaders in the Middle East to press for a durable solution beyond any immediate truce.

And members of the Quartet of world powers trying to promote Mideast peace concluded a conference call with an appeal for an immediate ceasefire. The Quartet powers are the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia.

The European Union itself late yesterday also urged an immediate truce and for Israel to reopen borders to allow vital supplies to reach Gazans. The Paris statement by the 27-member bloc avoided blaming either side for the current fighting.

In a meeting last night, Israel's leadership trio stepped up preparations for a ground offensive, conducting a telephone survey among cabinet ministers on a plan to call up an additional 2,500 reserve soldiers, if required. Earlier this week, the cabinet authorized a callup of 6,700 soldiers.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shellings continue

- Amid talk of a truce, Israeli warplanes continued to unload bombs on targets in Gaza. Israel's ground forces on Gaza's border also used artillery for the first time.
- Hamas kept up its rocket barrages, which have killed four Israelis since the weekend.

Free Daily News Group Inc., operating as Metro Toronto 1 Concorde Gate, Suite 703, Toronto, Ontario M3C 3N6. Publisher: Bill McDonald

Citytv New Year's BASH 2009

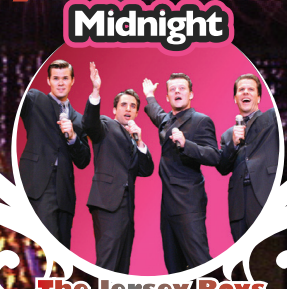
Special Performances by

11:47PM

Kreesha Turner

11:35PM

Danny Fernandes



Midnight

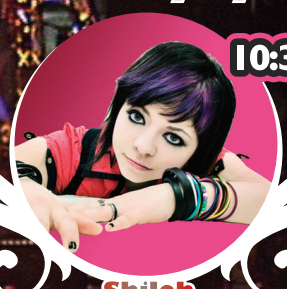
The Jersey Boys

10:50PM

Dru

11:10PM

Suzie McNeil



10:33PM

Shiloh

Hosted by

Gord Martineau

Dina Pugliese

Kevin Frankish

Tracy Moore

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Construction worker falls 20 storeys
Toronto police are still trying to figure out how a construction worker fell 20 storeys to his death during a fire downtown Monday night.Emergency officials were called to a highrise at 25 York St. around 11:30 p.m. Police and fire crews found a small blaze in a garbage can on the 20th floor and the body of a man in his late 30s on the ground floor. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Local

Fines depend on your sidewalk

Whether Toronto homeowners get charged for failing to clear snow from their sidewalks depends a lot on where they live, according to a city report. Residents of the old City of Toronto and East York are far more likely to get busted. Statistics from last winter show the city laid 383 charges against homeowners in those two locales for failing to clear snow last winter in Toronto and East York, after receiving 1,540 complaints. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Friday's Metro

Movies

Metro reviews Revolutionary Road starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.

metronews.ca

WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Video Families of avalanche victims devastated by tragedy at **metronews.ca/canada**
Video Racehorses sold for meat as industry staggers at **metronews.ca/canada**
Video Opposition coalition tops the list of 2008's biggest stories at **metronews.ca/canada**

Lotteries

Ontario Pick 3: 7 0 9; **Ontario Pick 4:** 3 6 1 1
Encore: 3006854
Daily Keno: 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 20, 30, 32, 40, 41, 43, 45, 48, 54, 56, 58, 59, 61, 64, 69
These results are not official.

News in brief

POWER Crews were making progress restoring power 48 hours after damaging winds raked the province, Ontario's largest utility said. As of last night, the number of Hydro One customers without power had been cut to 34,000, down from a height of 235,000 on Sunday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wacky weather in '08

It sure was a wet one.

With 1,043 millimetres of precipitation falling across the GTA as of yesterday, 2008 was officially the wettest year on record.

The winter of 2007-08 was the third-snowiest on record. And this month is on track to become the snowiest December since 1951, with more than 59 cm of snow having already fallen and another three to eight centimetres expected last night. The city's snow removal budget blew past its original $65 million allocation and could reach $80 million once this month's costs are added to the tally.

The spring and summer brought what seemed like never-ending downpours. Twice the normal number of violent thunderstorms knocked out power, flooded basements and cracked sewer lines.

"Not only did it rain often, it rained hard," said Dave Phillips, senior climatologist with Environment Canada. Toronto normally gets about four significant rain events — more than 25 mm of rain in one day — in a year. In 2008, we had 10.

STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The wind howled along King Street as falling glass from a tower under construction closed Bay Street and several other roads downtown on Dec. 19.

Weather predictions for 2009

Environment Canada's Dave Phillips envisions 2009 will bring:
- Less snow and rain
- January thaw "because we've only not had one in 170 years"
- A colder April
- Warmer, drier summer
- Overall, more dry weekends and fewer thunderstorms

The Snow

With 194 cm dumped on the city last winter, Toronto came just 13 cm shy of the snowiest winter on record in 1938-39. February saw 76.8 cm, more than triple the average for that month.

The Cold

The coldest day of the year was Feb. 28: -18 C. Usually, Toronto gets 15 days that dip below -15 C but this year we saw only eight.

The Rain

2008 was officially the wettest year on record for Toronto with 1,043 mm of precipitation, which includes snow and rain, as of Dec. 30. The record was broken Dec. 10, when the 1977 mark of 971.3 mm was surpassed. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

New Year's resolutions

Some of Toronto's well-known public figures on their 2009 resolutions, in no particular order:

Jamie Kennedy, celebrity chef
"My professional resolution might be to listen more and be a good coach to all the amazing talent in my company."

Mayor David Miller
"To push all parties in the federal Parliament to deliver a budget that addresses the needs of Torontonians by investing in Transit City."

Don Drummond, chief economist, TD Bank Financial Group
"To see more clearly how the economic and financial crises will play out, and influence the outcome for the better."

Michael Ignatieff, federal Liberal leader
Typically, Ignatieff doesn't make New Year's resolutions. But a spokesperson for the new Liberal leader said he plans to "start trimming my eyebrows more regularly."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

York, union to talk soon

STRIKE After weeks of standoff and stalled classes, the new year may offer hope for York University students.

Graham Potts, a chief negotiator for Local 3903 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, said the union representing York's graduate students, contract faculty and teaching assistants should be able to iron out a deal with the school's bargaining team when they resume negotiations at the bargaining table on Saturday. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Queen Street fire stays a mystery

INVESTIGATION The cause of the massive fire that gutted a strip of Queen Street West in February will remain unsolved, after fire officials yesterday announced they were unable to determine what set off the flames.

Investigators with the Office of the Fire Marshal found the fire erupted on the main floor of 615/617 Queen Street West — what used to be National Sound — but "the amount of damage in that area means we can't come up with a cause," said fire investigations manager Chris Williams.

22 Percentage of cases where a fire cause is labelled "undetermined."

In dealing with a blaze of this size, investigators first isolate the area of origin, then methodically identify and eliminate potential ignition sources, Williams said. But the flames sometimes compromise physical evidence — such as electrical wires or candles — that could hold the answer, or at least some clues, he said.

Under those circumstances, the office has no choice but to label the cause "undetermined," Williams said.

While they had expected no answers, many owners of the felled buildings said they felt let down by the report's lack of conclusions.

"I wasn't expecting much from the fire marshal," said Gary Duke, owner of the now-relocated Duke's Cycle, although he admitted the announcement was "a little bit of a letdown."

The findings have little effect on the two property owners except to provide closure. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Man flees taxi fare, fires shot at driver

ARRESTS Two were arrested yesterday after a male bolted on a taxi fare. The driver ran after him and the man pulled out a gun and fired. Officers surrounded a house and after a few hours arrested a man in his 20s and his girlfriend. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Funeral planned for victims of Newfoundland house fire
Funeral services are planned today for three young children who died in a house fire on Bell Island, N.L. The Dec. 20 fire claimed the lives of a seven-year-old girl, her five-year-old brother and another five-year-old boy who was their cousin. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada

CPP, EI hikes wipe out tax cuts

Higher employment insurance and Canada Pension Plan payments will wipe out skimpy tax cuts for many Canadians in 2009, according to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. While CPP contribution limits are normally raised each year, EI rates are lowered, making the overall increase to payroll taxes very small. But next year, both EI and CPP contribution limits increase. At the maximum (incomes more than $42,800), Canadians will pay an additional $188 in payroll taxes in 2009, the federation said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hockey's O'Ree honoured

First black NHL player named to the Order of Canada

Willie O'Ree, the first black player to compete in the NHL, was one of 60 people named yesterday to various ranks within the Order of Canada.

Two Canadian singing stars, Celine Dion and tenor Ben Heppner, were elevated to Companions of the Order, the highest of the three rankings.

TORSTAR FILE PHOTO

Willie O'Ree, a native of Fredericton, N.B., was named to the Order of Canada.

Also elevated to the Companion level were Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk and investment guru Stephen Jarislowsky of Montreal.

It was on Jan. 18, 1958, when O'Ree, a native of Fredericton, N.B., played for the Boston Bruins in a game against the Canadiens in Montreal. O'Ree was playing senior hockey for the Quebec Aces when Boston called him up for a game in the Montreal Forum.

There were no racial slurs hurled at O'Ree that night. Jackie Robinson, the first black major-league baseball player, had been on a team in Montreal, so seeing a black man in a major sport was nothing new to sports fans of the city, and O'Ree had previously skated in the city with the Aces.

O'Ree, 73, is now the director of youth development for the NHL's diversity program, which provides access to the sport for children throughout North America. It's a full-time job he took 10 years ago.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ben Heppner

Celine Dion

Peter Munk

Stephen Jarislowsky

News in brief

ABORTION The Prime Minister's Office has reaffirmed its position that the government has no intention of reopening the abortion debate following a Conservative MP's comments that the issue needs to be addressed.

SHOOTING Ontario's civilian police watchdog agency is investigating the shooting of two people after a confrontation involving Ottawa police early Monday morning.

KHADR Calls for Omar Khadr's repatriation may well be answered in the new year as the incoming U.S. president Barack Obama moves to shutter Guantanamo Bay. THE CANADIAN PRESS

B.C. avalanche survivor helps find final victim

TRAGEDY The body of the eighth and final victim of a series of deadly avalanches in southeastern B.C. has been recovered.

One of three survivors of the avalanches was at the scene assisting search-and-rescue personnel when the body of Daniel Bjarnason, 28, was retrieved late yesterday morning.

Jeff Adams went up the mountain to help search crews pinpoint where Bjarnason's body might be. Adams and two colleagues had managed to dig themselves out after three avalanches hit the group of 11 snowmobilers.

David Wilks, mayor of Sparwood, said Adams wanted to help "get his last buddy back."

The first seven bodies were recovered Monday from the treacherous backcountry area where the avalanches occurred: Kurt Kabel, 28; Warren Rothel, 33; Kane Rusnak, 30; Thomas Talarico, 32; Blayne Wilson, 26; Michael Stier, 20; and Michael's father, Leonard Stier, 45.

Adams, Jordan Drake and Jeremy Rusnak survived the avalanches. They tried to help their mates but decided to leave the area when they determined another avalanche might hit.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Iran detains Canadian blogger

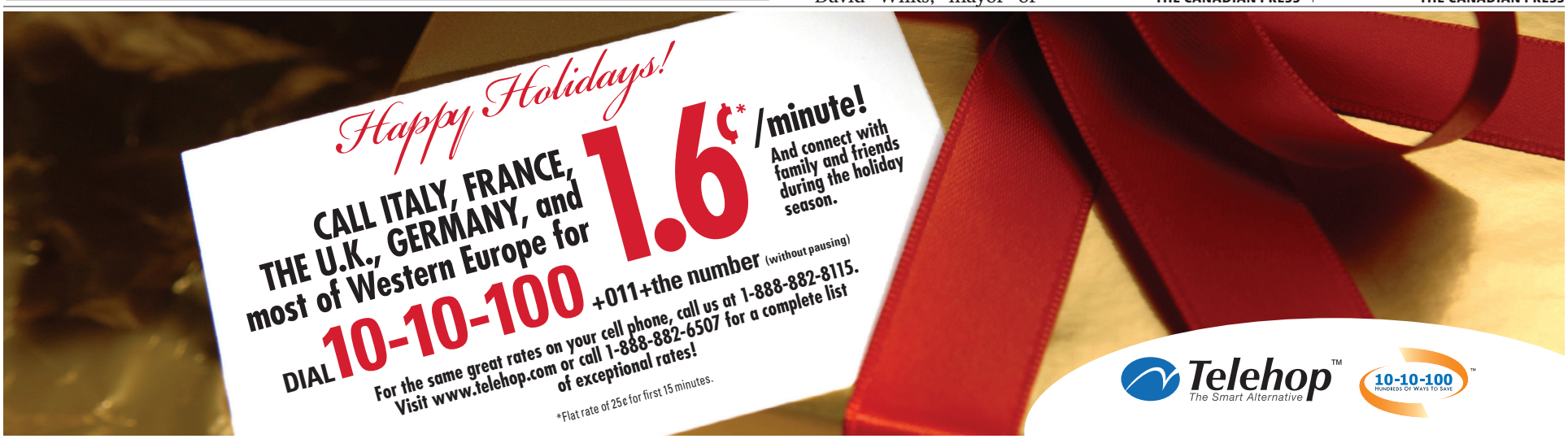
ARREST Iran confirmed yesterday that a well-known Iranian-Canadian blogger, who had made trips to Israel, was in detention.

Judiciary spokesman Ali Reza Jamshidi told reporters that Hossein Derakhshan was detained under order from the revolutionary court.

Derakhshan, 33, described as the "father" of Iran's vigorous blogging scene, had been rumoured to be in prison for the last two months according to international human rights groups, before yesterday's confirmation.

He was detained in November, a few weeks after he returned to Iran.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Clintons to help ring in new year at Times Square

Senator Hillary Clinton and former president Bill Clinton will join Mayor Michael Bloomberg in New York City's Times Square to help lower the New Year's Eve ball. The former first couple will help lead revellers in the final 60-second countdown and push the ceremonial button that lowers the ball tonight. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World/Business

NATO supply route to U.S. troops blocked

Pakistan closed the main route used to ferry supplies to American and allied troops in Afghanistan yesterday after launching a fresh offensive against militants in the area.

The road through the Khyber Pass in northwest Pakistan has come under increasing attacks by militants seeking to squeeze Western forces fighting a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan in recent months.

Western soldiers in landlocked Afghanistan rely on the winding, mountainous route for delivery of up to 75 per cent of their fuel, food and other logistical goods, which arrive in Pakistan via the port city of Karachi.

American commanders insist the attacks are not disrupting their mission in Afghanistan, but say they are exploring new routes. They say they have enough supplies to last many weeks in case the routes are blocked. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russian leader paves way for Putin

MOSCOW Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev has signed a law extending presidential terms to six years, the Kremlin said yesterday, a move seen as paving the way for Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency.

Medvedev's final endorsement of the legislation follows its quick approval by the Kremlin-controlled parliament and all of Russia's 83 provincial legislatures.

Putin, who remains popular, was barred constitutionally from seeking a third straight term as president. He tapped his protege Medvedev as his favoured successor. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

India **Welcoming another year**

AJIT SOLANKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Children hold the figure 2009 during a function to welcome the year 2009 at a school in Ahmadabad, India, yesterday.

News in brief

BANGKOK Thailand's government was forced to change the venue of its key policy speech yesterday as thousands of demonstrators loyal to exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra surrounded parliament. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Business

Big year ahead for Bell, Rogers

The final weeks of 2008 delivered shockers to Canada's two largest telecom companies, with the failure of the $52-billion takeover bid for Bell Canada's parent company BCE Inc., and the death of Ted Rogers, founder of Rogers Communications.

Both developments put the companies into limbo as execs met to discuss their approach in 2009.

BCE says it's aiming to focus more on paying dividends to shareholders than repaying debt, and will invest millions on upgrades to its technology.

Rogers plans to unveil its successor to Ted Rogers, the company's president and chief executive, in January.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

In **brief**

TRADING Most world stock markets gained in light holiday trading yesterday. In the U.S., Dow futures were up 53 points, or 0.6 per cent, to 8,541 and S&P's 500 futures rose 7.6 points, or 0.9 per cent, to 878. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAS Ontario customers of Natural Resource Gas Ltd. are expected to see their heating bills drop in 2009. The Ontario Energy Board has approved changes to rates charged by the company, starting Jan. 1. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Comment & Views

Lots of good news for the coming year

On the**Line**

Christine Williams

Politics and social issues

If this title sounds unusual to you, it is because of it's unfamiliarity given regular news headlines.

News can be rather depressing, particularly when heaped onto your personal daily overloads. Yet, it is beneficial to know what is happening in the world even if events are negatively skewed.

So, amid reports of Toronto's 70th murder at a Christmas party last Saturday, parliamentary anarchy and news of another Canadian getting killed in Khandahar, we are faced with the eternal inner struggle of seeing the proverbial glass half full — difficult given the adversities and calamities around us, even in our personal lives.

Perhaps we can begin by embracing the bad news to gain perspective on how much we need to do our part — for the good of the world in which we live and for those around us.

As we all prepare to face yet another new year, we make personal resolutions because of the hope it brings. We don't even care that we made the resolution to lose weight for the past five years of no avail — but we do it anyway.

The good news for the coming year is that there is always hope.

No one can steal hope from us unless we let them.

Hope is the fuel that drives us on to face each day when we get up in the morning. There are endless reasons to go on hoping, as demonstrated with some real-life paradigms: The Ancaster woman who went missing during a blizzard being found alive, buried in 23 inches of snow after four days, neighbours helping neighbours, communities pooling their efforts for salient causes like cancer research, and programs of mentorship outreaches to troubled youth. As for the small unsung achievements in all of our lives, we'll all benefit by giving ourselves a big pat on the back for those.

Beating ourselves up daily is an antithesis to positive self-growth.

It is a well-established fact that a positive mind energizes and enables you. So building a positive attitude in the face of unavoidable challenges is critical in cultivating hope.

My resolution for the upcoming year is to be picky about the positive things in life, not the negative, and my hope is to be joined in this drive.

Christine Williams is the producer and host of the live current affairs daily talk show On the Line at CTS TV in Burlington, Ont.

Word on the street: Are you optimistic for 2009 despite the gloomy financial forecast?

Karen McKenzie
age 46, Toronto

A: Well, from my perspective, 2009 can't be any worse than 2008. I'm looking forward to a better financial year next year.

Patrick Scott
age 28, Oakville

A: Well, for myself, I feel like I've kind of prepared myself. I'm not being affected.

Tony Shi
age 20, Toronto

A: I'm optimistic – the stocks don't affect me.

Clifford Dunnett
age 18, Scarborough

A: I'm looking forward to it. Well, New Year's comes and lots of things have a new beginning to it. Beginnings are always the best.

Dejan Teodorovic
age 19, Toronto

A: I'm optimistic just because I have a job and I go to school. I have a stable job now.

Kristin Kurian
age 35, Toronto

A: I am optimistic, but we do need to continue to help those who are feeling the pain of the economic downturn.

Letters

Abortion debate story was misleading to readers

Re: Conservative MPs reopening abortion debate

I think the information in your article would have been more objective had you bothered to mention that although it is legal in Canada to terminate a pregnancy at any stage, elective abortions are not performed in Canada after 22 weeks. Pregnancies terminated after this time are done so because the woman's life is at risk or the born baby is unable to survive. It would be appreciated if you could stop making it look like the anti-choice lobbyists are the only ones who feel emotions.

SANDRA ESPINOZA, TORONTO

Nuclear energy can help maintain basic functions

Enthusiastic and well-meaning environmentalists miss the point in their lack of knowledge of the distinction between base load and peak load. Renewables contribute beneficially to peak load but are not available 24/7. The sun does not always shine and wind does not always blow. Base load keeps industry running and can be relied on for essential services, such as hospitals, elevators, communications and subways.

Base load is provided mainly by coal, oil and gas. I am an environmentalist who favours nuclear energy for base load.

THOMAS DOWELL, TORONTO

It's your turn to tell others what you think. E-mail your thoughts and opinions to: torontoletters@metronews.ca
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GTA employers want college grads

According to a George Brown College survey, when asked about overall preparedness for employment, 80 per cent of GTA employers said college grads were equally or better prepared than their university counterparts. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Workology

Accepted or not?

Earlier this week, about 50 applicants to Illinois-based Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management received acceptance letters when it turns out they actually had been rejected.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: DOUGLAS DUNLOP, DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

Days of working 9 to 5 dwindling away?

Job Trends

ROBYN YOUNG
for Metro Canada

Working 9 to 5 is a way to make a living, but it's not the only way.

As the world economy continues its downward spiral, companies are turning to home-based models of employment to save money, save the environment and improve employee life/work balance according to James Rick Stinson, CEO and founder of Global Sky, an outsourcing provider.

The organization runs an international call centre out of Manila in the Philippines and has more recently started to move towards a home-based model.

"The old paradigm of the 9 to 5 or the eight hours a day is based on a time when the industrialists sort of needed people in the factories and needed people producing raw materials," Stinson said.

"And we don't necessarily need to work within that paradigm anymore, it's just that most people have because it was sort of the benchmark for how much we needed to work."

The new model, Stinson said, is for employees to work when they want and as long as they want.

"Now, instead of acting like you're productive two hours out of the day … work the two hours that you're very productive, maximize your income during that time and then take the rest of the day off," he said.

The freedom of working form home, away from the office, is more attainable in the current job market than ever before.

A Canadian Social Trends study published by Statistics Canada in 2007, noted that on average, workers in the country spend 45 minutes less with their family during workdays in 2005 than they did two decades earlier because they were spending more time working.

With the advent of new software and technology, employers are still able to monitor and measure metrics of their employees, Stinson said.

Employees can work from home and home can be anywhere in the world, he added.

"I encourage them to move to low-cost areas where the lifestyle is still good so they can still accomplish the goal of minimizing their expenses and maximizing their income," he said.

Commute

- Another StatsCan survey about commuting times found the average Canadian now spends nearly two full weeks a year commuting to and from work.

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Shanahan fired
The Denver Broncos fired coach Mike Shanahan, right, yesterday. Shanahan was the NFL's second longest-tenured coach at 14 seasons. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Lindros under fire?

YorkReport

Marty York
marty.york@metronews.ca

Mystery surrounds former NHL superstar Eric Lindros.

Three sources with the NHL Players Association have told Metro they are unhappy with the work — or lack of work — from Lindros as the union's ombudsman this season and are discussing the notion of dismissing him early in the new year.

At the same time, sources outside the NHLPA have told Metro that Lindros is dealing with health problems not usually associated with anyone as young as him.

Lindros, 35, couldn't be reached for comment and his father and ex-agent, Carl Lindros, told an NHLPA employee yesterday that he isn't interested in discussing his son with Metro.

Glenn Healy of the NHLPA told Metro he has not seen Lindros in at least three weeks, comments echoed by several other union employees.

"Eric's not easily accessible," an NHLPA employee said. "You can't leave him voice mail anywhere and he seldom comes into our office. We haven't seen him in a very long time."

CBC hockey analyst Mike Milbury, a former NHL general manager, coach and player, said the other day he has information that the NHLPA feels Lindros has been doing a poor job as ombudsman and has been causing problems between the players and executive director Paul Kelly.

Ex-NHLer Steve Larmer, a member of the NHLPA's advisory board, told Metro he wasn't "at liberty to either confirm or deny anything at all about Eric."

Both Larmer and Healy said they weren't aware of any health issues affecting Lindros. Another NHLPA executive, however, said Lindros has put on "an unbelievable amount of weight" since retiring as a player after last season.

The Big E, as he was known, spent 13 seasons in the NHL. He joined the NHLPA in the newly created role of ombudsman before this season and was also supposed to double as a non-voting member of the executive board.

• MLB Hall of Famer Ferguson Jenkins of Chatham, Ont., will be among the ex-Cubs superstars at the Blackhawks' Winter Classic at Chicago's Wrigley Field tomorrow.

"Hockey was my first love," Fergie said. "I was a junior B defenceman."

• The da-da-da-da-duh Hockey Theme music finally will include lyrics tonight, thanks to the Barenaked Ladies. Check it out on TSN tonight.

NHL Sundin suits up in Vancouver

DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cameras follow Vancouver Canucks centre Mats Sundin during his first practice with his new team yesterday. Sundin wasn't expected to play last night, but will possibly make his Canucks debut Jan. 7 in Edmonton.

Canada gets ready for U.S. tonight

The first time Jimmy Hayes came to Scotiabank Place, he was booed. It was last June, he'd just been drafted by the Toronto Maple Leafs and the pro-Senator crowd booed anything Blue and White.

This week, Hayes and the rest of a talented American squad have been booed by the pro-Canadian crowd through the early games of the world junior hockey championship.

"You've got to get used to it," grinned Hayes.

Tonight's crowd reaction will probably go much further. Going to the victor in this emerging rivalry between Canada and the United States is first place in Group A and a trip straight to the semifinals. Leafs scouts remain high on Hayes, to the point they believe the Americans are misusing him.

He's a talented scorer for Boston College, but because he's six-foot-five and 205 pounds, the Americans are using him as a physical player on the checking line. Perhaps it's a testament to the American squad — believed to be every inch as talented as the Canadian one — that a player with Hayes' skill-set finds himself as a role player.

And that's a big reason why many believe that a Canada-U.S. game can eclipse a Canada-Russia game in terms of intensity.

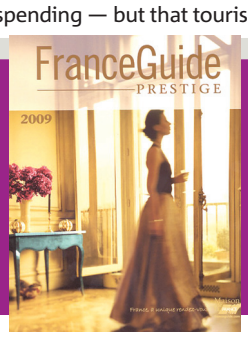
"A lot of us have grown up with them and play with them," said John Tavares.

"You just want to beat each other for bragging rights for the rest of the season." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

NYC's record visitor numbers

Mayor Michael Bloomberg says New York City attracted a record number of visitors this year — about 47 million, generating $30 billion US in spending — but that tourism growth has slowed amid a worldwide economic downturn. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Travel



A sign of spring

Spring travel may seem a long way off right now, but if you'd like to know what's new in the French tourism industry for 2009, keep your eye out for a copy of FranceGuide Prestige. The glossy mag is being distributed through select travel agencies, restaurants and top French brands such as L'Occitane en Provence, Longchamp and Louis Vuitton; visit *franceguide.com* or contact canada@franceguide.com for further information. METRO NEWS SERVICES

TRAVELDESK@METRONEWS.CA

Ontario outings

• If you wish you'd arranged to spend New Year's Eve out of the city, don't despair — all's not yet lost. Visit *400eleven.com* and click on the New Year's Eve Getaways section for a comprehensive list of packages, then pick up the phone and start inquiring about availability. Though to be on the safe side, you'd be wise to first check up on the power outages that have plagued the province in recent days; go to *hydroonenetworks.com* and click on Power Outage Notification System for regularly-updated maps of outages and service restoration. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Top destinations to visit next year

TheTravelJunkie

Julia Dimon

metronews.ca/traveljunkie

Following the path of certain guidebook giants, I'd like to offer picks for up-and-coming places to visit in 2009:

Oruro, Bolivia: Bolivia offers sacred Inca ruins, rich colonial architecture and a vibrant capital city replete with witches markets. Visit Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable body of water, or Salar de Uyuni, the largest salt flat on earth. In February, catch Devil's Carnival, in the mining town of Oruro, where revellers in outlandish masks and costumes pay homage to Mother Earth and the god of the underworld in a colourful display of religious fervor.

Vilnius, Lithuania: Vilnius is a major art hub and hidden gem of a destination that's been named a European Capital of Culture for 2009. The city's Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site with Gothic cathedrals and unique shops is considered one of the most beautiful urban spots in Eastern Europe. Best of all, Lithuania doesn't use the Euro, so it's more affordable than other parts of Europe.

Ljubljana, Slovenia: With some 50,000 University students living in Ljubljana, the city is abuzz with culture and nightlife. It's also rich with historical architecture, and boasts a well-established tourist infrastructure and lots of English speakers.

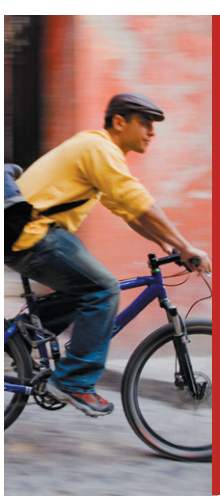
JULIA DIMON/FOR METRO CANADA

Ljubljana, Slovenia is and up-and-coming

Nuuk, Greenland: Those interested in destinations threatened by climate change will find Greenland is an off-the-beaten-track alternative to cruise-clogged Alaska. It has oodles of activities from angling, whale watching, and dog-sledding to trekking along the largest active glacier in the Northern Hemisphere. On the downside, Greenland's not cheap, and you must fly between towns.

Berlin, Germany: Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and special exhibitions, memorials and tours will abound. As one option, trace part of the structure's former path with a GPS-guided walking tour that takes in Checkpoint Charlie and the longest preserved portion of the wall. Then visit Friedrichshain, an area once part of East Berlin that's dotted with hipster bars, punk clubs and relics of Soviet times.

Julia Dimon is co-host of Word Travels, airing on OLN; juliadimon.com, thetraveljunkie.ca.



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Fox seeks delay of Watchmen release
An attorney for 20th Century Fox says the studio will continue to seek an order delaying the release of Watchmen. U.S. Judge Gary Feess last week agreed with Fox that Warner Bros. had infringed its copyright by developing and shooting the superhero flick, scheduled for release March 6. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Entertainment

Woody weds

Woody Harrelson and his girlfriend of two decades, Laura Louie, were married in Hawaii on Sunday. They have three daughters together. PEOPLE.COM

EDITOR: DEAN LISK, DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Kreesha's resolution

Singer seeks redemption at Citytv's New Year's Eve bash

BRIAN TOWIE
Metro Canada

Kreesha Turner will look to step up her game in 2009.

The 23-year-old Edmonton-raised pop chanteuse wants to redeem herself when she performs at Citytv's New Year's Eve Bash at Nathan Phillips Square tonight.

Turner made news after her rendition of O Canada was less than well received by a packed Rogers Centre crowd in attendance for the Buffalo Bills-Miami Dolphins NFL tilt earlier this month. Incensed by her jazz-pop version of the anthem, fans booed and sang to drown her out.

"I was really nervous in that situation. Knowing your audience is important," Turner said to Metro. "Now I know that you shouldn't do a jazzy version of the national anthem for sports fans who are eager to get things going."

Live and learn, right? Turner wants to get back on the horse in a year that will see the release of her debut Passion and a 15-date cross-country tour that ends with the 2009 Juno Awards in Vancouver (though Turner has yet to confirm if she'll perform there). If the popularity of Bounce With Me is any indicator — a single featured on teen dramas Gossip Girl and The Hills — she'll more than likely rise to this challenge.

Turner's not letting the notoriety go to her head though (Unlikely praise for the singer's work came from celebrity gossip blogger Perez Hilton), crediting friends and family with keeping her feet planted firmly on the ground. She argues that once your star rises in the business, ego can often replace common sense — something she says she's tried to avoid.

"Certain artists, whatever their muse is, can get caught up in their esthetic," she said. "My stability comes from my family and a close set of friends, especially my mom. She has no qualms about telling me the way things really are. It's a reflection of my morals and who I really am."

EMI CANADA PHOTO

The countdown

- Turner joins Suzie McNeil and the cast of Jersey Boys at the Citytv New Year's Eve Bash '09 at Nathan Phillips Square tonight at 10:30 p.m.
- The event will be hosted by Dina Pugliese, Gord Martineau, Kevin Frankish and Tracy Moore.
- The bash will be broadcast live on Citytv.

Barenaked Ladies cover hockey tune

MUSIC The Barenaked Ladies' cover of the old Hockey Night in Canada theme song will debut on TSN tonight. The bluegrass version of the song will air during the first intermission of a game between Edmonton and Calgary at 10 p.m. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Clark ready to ring in new year

PEOPLE Four years after a stroke, Dick Clark is relishing the prospect of another New Year's Eve celebration, determined to appear for his 36th year in Times Square. Clark, who turned 79 last month and has been in front of the cameras for 61 years, said in a recent interview by e-mail that his involvement in Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest 2009, is a labour of love and "not really a job." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Three times lucky

Grey's Anatomy actress Chyler Leigh is expecting her third child, people.com has learned. The actress, 26, and her actor/musician husband, Nathan West, are already parents to two children. **PEOPLE.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

NYPD worried about Jonas mob on NYE

MOB SCENE They may be nothing more than three skinny teenagers with nice hair, but they've struck fear into the hearts of New York City's finest, reports people.com.

According to the magazine, the New York Police Department — which has heroically handled terrorist attacks, blackouts and riots without a whimper — is being cautious over the "mob scene" that could result when the Jonas Brothers perform in Times Square at Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest tonight.

According to a source, police officials fessed up to their concerns in a recent meeting with producers of the show, reports People.

"So they're now planning on using extra (security) men for support," the source says. "It's going to be crazy because everyone will be in Times Square to watch them perform on the show." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

Scarlett 'happy' with secretive wedding

RELATIONSHIPS Scarlett Johansson says she's "happy with the results" of her private wedding ceremony to Ryan Reynolds, msn.com reports.

"It was my mission to have a moment of privacy, to do something for myself," she tells the Los Angeles Times. Reports of the wedding didn't come out until days later and no pictures of the ceremony have yet to hit the tabloids.

Johansson also says she's considering a new career path. The actress is set to star in the new film He's Just Not That Into You, produced by Drew Barrymore and Nancy Juvonen — and says she too would like to produce some day.

"They make movies that they like, that they're proud of, that people love, that is entertaining," she tells the Times. "I would love to be able to do that someday, have a production company and encourage other directors and writers to follow their vision." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Britney courting choreographer?

RUMOURED Could Britney Spears be wooing her Bollywood choreographer? So asks TMZ.com, citing the U.K. Mirror, which claims Britney has been seeing Sandip Soparrkar, the guy who did the steps for Womanizer. In fact, says the tab, Spears actually went to India over Christmas to hang out with Soparrkar, and they exchanged presents. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Aguilera in awe of birth process

BIRTH Christina Aguilera has "a newfound respect" for her body after giving birth, femalefirst.co.uk reports. She said: "I really have a newfound respect for the female body after going through this process. I still have a way to go with losing the weight but I will start working out and boxing soon, (though) I'm not going to go crazy about it." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Cate talks surgery

IMAGE Cate Blanchett says her marriage of 11 years could be over if she goes under the knife, according to usmagazine.com.

The actress — who currently stars in The Curious Case of Benjamin Button with Brad Pitt — tells Vanity Fair: "I haven't done anything, but who knows. Andrew (Upton) said he'd divorce me if I did anything."

But that doesn't mean she'd never mess with her famous face.

"I'm not a spokesperson against the world of injectables," the 39-year-old mother of three boys says. "If you grow up in an environment where your mother gets you a boob job when you turn 18, what hope is there? But I didn't grow up in that world.

"The reason I went to train as an actor was that I was interested in it for the long haul," she adds. "You can become very self-obsessed, but you've got to keep looking outward." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Ride home on Diddy's tab

PARTY Need a ride on New Year's Eve? Call Diddy, advises usmagazine.com. The music mogul and Ciroc Vodka are reportedly teaming up with the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission to give away free cab rides this evening.

"New York is the world's most iconic New Year's Eve city," Diddy tells New York's Daily News. "So let's lead by example and show everyone that a sophisticated holiday celebration doesn't just end when the ball drops, but when everyone gets home safely."

Beginning at 11 p.m., reps from the vodka brand will be handing out $15 US debit cards in Times Square. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Who likes to party? Not Beyoncé

PEOPLE Beyoncé Knowles hates going to parties, femalefirst.co.uk reports. The 27-year-old singer — who is married to Jay-Z — admits she dislikes attending social gatherings because she always feels like the other guests are spying on her.

She said: "I don't really go out much. If I wasn't a celebrity then I don't know how I would feel, but it's not that much fun for me — it feels like I'm in a cage and everyone is watching." **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Lindsey's dad calls mudslinging truce

FAMILY Michael Lohan says his war of words with daughter Lindsay is on hold for now, usmagazine.com reports. "There is a truce between Lindsay and I, so please stop adding any fuel to the fire," he blogged on his new official site. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

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†The 2008 vehicles' Powertrain components are covered by a limited Powertrain component warranty for up to 5 years or 160,000 km, whichever comes first. See Retailer for details and conditions on limited warranty and customer assistance/service features. ^Coverage for up to 5 years or 160,000 km, whichever comes first. **Within the first 30 days or 2,500 km of delivery, whichever comes first.** You should know this: §Cash purchase price includes discounts or other incentives which will result in higher effective interest rates. By selecting purchase financing or lease offers, consumers will be foregoing such discounts and incentives, which will result in higher effective interest rates. $500/$1,000/$1,000/$1,500 manufacturer to Retailer delivery credit (tax exclusive) available on 2008 Saturn ASTRA 5-Door XE/2008 Saturn VUE XE/2008 Saturn AURA XE/2008 Saturn OUTLOOK XE. Such delivery credit is available on cash purchase and is reflected in offers in this advertisement. See Retailer for details. ¥Freight ($1,300/$1,200/$1,250/$1,220) on a 2008 Saturn ASTRA 5-Door XE/2008 Saturn VUE XE/2008 Saturn AURA XE/2008 Saturn OUTLOOK XE not included. Taxes, licence, insurance, registration, administration fees, fees associated with publication/filing at the movable property registry/PPSA, duties, and optional equipment extra. PDI included. Retailers are free to set individual prices. Retailer trade may be necessary. Offers apply as indicated to new 2008 Saturn ASTRA 5-Door XE with manual transmission, 2008 Saturn VUE XE, 2008 Saturn AURA XE or 2008 Saturn OUTLOOK XE models (excluding hybrid models) and apply to qualified retail and eligible fleet customers in the Ontario Marketing Association Area only. See your Retailer, visit saturncanada.com or call 1-888-4SATURN for conditions and details. °Fuel efficiency data was determined using approved Transport Canada test methods. £On approved GMAC credit only. See Retailer for details. ♦Donated vehicles must be licensed and insured for the previous consecutive 6-month period. For eligibility requirements, visit carheaven.ca. GM reserves the right to amend or terminate these offers and/or the program for any reason, in whole or in part, at any time, without notice.

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The Weather Network 20 YEARS
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Today Partly cloudy -9° / -13°
Thursday Partly cloudy -6° / -8°
Friday Flurries 60% 0° / -7°

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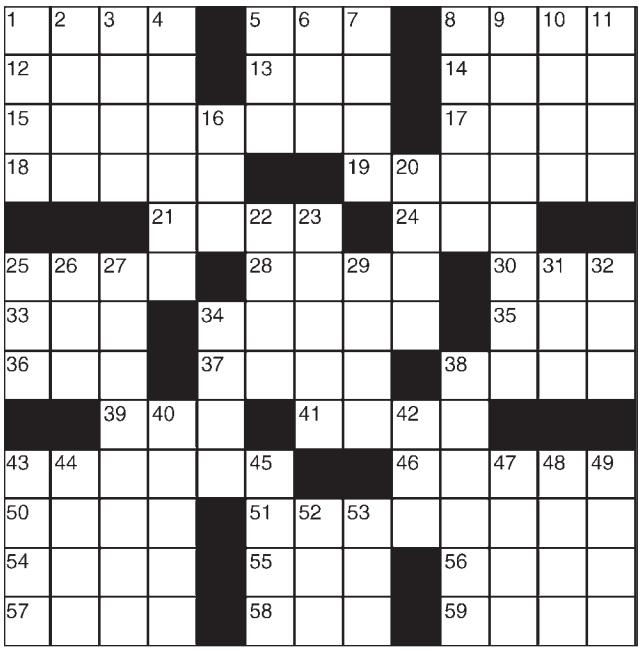

Crossword across

1 See 31-Down
5 Satchel
8 Criterion
12 Colliery
13 Gabor or Peron
14 Bygone Peruvian
15 Risk
17 Leading man?
18 Lariat component
19 Some of the nobility
21 Source of wealth
24 Needlefish
25 Follow instructions
28 "Bus Stop" playwright
30 Wield a needle
33 Triumphed
34 Done
35 Id counterpart
36 Young fellow
37 Portal
38 Rim
39 Very long time
41 Sport
43 Evangelist Billy
46 Art
50 Turkish money
51 Try
54 Bakery worker
55 "Now I — me down ..."
56 Infamous lyre player
57 Portend
58 Casual shirt
59 Deuce beater

Crossword down

1 Sign of things to come
2 Veritas source
3 Loosen
4 Contemptibly small
5 Plead
6 "Hail!"
7 Apparel
8 Miss America's topper
9 Backed
10 Read quickly
11 Scottish chapeaus
16 Ultra-modernist
20 On in years
22 Pebbles' pet
23 Furnish with a grant
25 Woodsy is one
26 Feathery accessory
27 Evoked affection
29 "American Gigolo" actor
31 Early bird?
32 Tragedy
34 — St. Vincent Millay
38 Wandering
40 Midwest airport
42 Expert
43 Smooth-talking
44 Puerto follower
45 Dissolve
47 State with certainty
48 Links warning
49 Helen of —
52 Dundee denial
53 Go blond

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

6	7		9		8		3	4
				5				
	3						1	
		2	4		5	6		
1								5
		3	1		6	9		
	8						9	
				7				
2	5		3		4		6	8

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

A	F	A	R	■	M	A	C	■	A	D	O	S		
R	O	L	E	■	A	S	H	■	G	O	R	E		
C	O	L	V	I	L	L	E	■	O	O	Z	E		
■	■	■	U	T	E	■	N	E	U	R	O	N		
H	I	V	E	S	■	T	I	N	T	■	■	■		
O	D	E	S	■	M	E	L	V	I	L	L	E		
L	E	I	■	F	I	L	L	Y	■	A	I	D		
D	A	N	V	I	L	L	E	■	L	O	N	G		
■	■	■	A	R	K	S	■	R	I	S	K	Y		
G	U	R	N	E	Y	■	W	E	B	■	■	■		
E	T	U	I	■	W	H	O	V	I	L	L	E		
L	A	S	T	■	A	U	K	■	D	E	E	R		
T	H	E	Y	■	Y	E	S	■	O	V	E	R		

9	5	8	7	3	4	2	6	1
4	3	1	6	2	8	7	9	5
6	2	7	1	5	9	4	3	8
3	9	6	8	4	2	1	5	7
7	8	4	9	1	5	6	2	3
2	1	5	3	6	7	9	8	4
8	6	2	4	7	3	5	1	9
5	7	9	2	8	1	3	4	6
1	4	3	5	9	6	8	7	2

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:
Under 13 min Genius
13-17 min Scholar
17-21 min Smart
21-25 min Not bad
25+ min Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day

Beef in beer casserole

INGREDIENTS:
1 lb (500 g) lean beef stewing steak, cubed
2 tbsp (25 mL) oatmeal, roughly chopped
2 tbsp (25 mL) extra virgin olive oil
2 onions, finely chopped
2 1/2 cups (600 mL) beer
4 sprigs of fresh thyme
3 juniper berries, crushed
2 pinches of allspice
1/2 cup (125 mL) baby shallots or small pickling onions, peeled
10 oz (275 g) baby carrots, scrubbed and trimmed
10 oz (275 g) baby parsnips or baby turnips, scrubbed and trimmed, or mature ones, scrubbed and cubed
1 baguette

METHOD:
1. Preheat oven to 325°F (160°C). Toss pieces of steak in oatmeal to lightly coat, then shake to remove excess.
2. Heat oil in heavy flameproof casserole dish and cook beef until lightly coloured. Transfer to plate. Add chopped onions to casserole dish and cook gently over a low heat, stirring frequently, for about 10 minutes until softened and golden.
3. Add beer, thyme, juniper berries and allspice plus a little seasoning to taste, and bring to boil, stirring constantly.
4. Stir in shallots or onions, whole baby carrots, parsnips or turnips, and beef with its juices. When boiling, cover casserole dish and put into oven. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 1 1/2 hours until meat is really tender.
5. Meanwhile, cut baguette into slices about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick and lay on baking tray. Bake for about 15 minutes until lightly brown and crisp. Arrange toasted bread on top of meat and vegetables and cook, uncovered, for a further 5 minutes. Serve hot, straight from the casserole dish.

SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**

Horoscopes AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
Dreams will show that changes are accelerating. Help an associate with their appearance. A man will make a very serious decision.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
You'll enjoy gourmet treats too much. Waiting for somebody will start to aggravate you. Visiting with friends will be comforting.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
A control freak has emotional fatigue. Check out weird news updates. Work with others to create a healthier situation.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
Don't be afraid of a helpless person. Put your feelings down in words. A gorgeous guy causes hearts to flutter.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
Don't be awe-struck when a fortune-teller is right. Higher expenses will shock you. Watch out for an underground romance.

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Your enthusiasm inspires life-changing decisions. A ruthless person is tripped up by a bad habit. A rebel makes a confession.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
Laugh when a mix-up takes place. Don't protect anyone from reality. Time passes too quickly to enjoy a secret pleasure.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
Your help is appreciated more than you know. A latecomer gets the boot. An insecure idiot is greeted with gladness.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
Don't be deceived by a former friend. A meeting with an older man will be delayed. An old woman makes a shocking announcement.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
A sympathetic friend will soothe your pain. A nice person is behind a complex deception. A charming female offers a social invitation.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
Someone's flirting becomes enchanting. Refuse to interfere with a self-important busybody. A comical buddy comes home to roost.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Ask someone to slow down so you can catch up. Be sensitive to changing moods. Bravely put all fools in their place.

TELL METRO READERS WHAT YOU THINK

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This day in history

DEC. 31, 1946: U.S. President Harry Truman officially proclaims the end of hostilities in World War II.
DEC. 31, 1961: The Marshall Plan expires after distributing more than $12 billion US in foreign aid to rebuild Europe.
DEC. 31, 1987: Robert Mugabe becomes President of Zimbabwe.
DEC. 31, 1991: All official Soviet Union institutions have ceased operations by this date and the Soviet Union is officially dissolved.
DEC. 31,1999: Boris Yeltsin resigns as President of Russia, leaving Prime Minister Vladimir Putin as the acting President.
DEC. 31, 2004: The official opening of Taipei 101, the current tallest skyscraper in the world, standing at a height of 509 metres.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

WORDY GURDY®

BY TRICKY RICKY KANE

1. Long-running fight over edibles (1)
2. Invitee vitality (1)
3. "The West Wing" Rob's black birds (1)
4. Humorous poet Ogden's big parties (2)
5. Totally soak a nut-turning tool (1)
6. More concise or more tipsy author (2)
7. Prevention of access to a military lockup (2)

Every answer is a rhyming pair of words (like FAT CAT and DOUBLE TROUBLE), and they will fit in the letter squares. The number after the definition tells you how many syllables in each word. To win $10, send your original rhymes with your definitions to this newspaper. All entries become the property of UFS, Inc.

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Thanks and $10 to Grace Hrvatin of Ruston, WA for #7. Send your entry to this newspaper.

ANSWERS
1. FOOD FEUD 2. GUEST ZEST 3. LOWES CROWS 4. NASHS BASHES
5. DRENCH WRENCH 6. TIGHTER WRITER 7. STOCKADE BLOCKADE

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